

NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK NOMINATION

NPS Form 10-900

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form (Rev. 8-86)

OMB No. 1024-0018

HILDA M. WILLING (Chesapeake Skipjack)

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United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

T-531

Historic Name: **HILDA M. WILLING**

Other Name/Site Number: Chesapeake Skipjack *Hilda M. Willing*

2. LOCATION

Street & Number: Dogwood Harbor

Not for publication: N/A

City/Town: Tilghman Island

Vicinity: N/A

State: MD

County: Talbot

Code: 041

Zip Code: 21671

3. CLASSIFICATION

Ownership of Property

Private: X

Public-Local:

Public-State:

Public-Federal:

Category of Property

Building(s):

District:

Site:

Structure: X

Object:

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing

1

1

Noncontributing

 buildings

 sites

 structures

 objects

0 Total

Number of Contributing Resources Previously Listed in the National Register: 1

Name of Related Multiple Property Listing: N/A

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4. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this _____ nomination _____ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property _____ meets _____ does not meet the National Register Criteria.

Signature of Certifying Official_____
Date_____
State or Federal Agency and Bureau

In my opinion, the property _____ meets _____ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of Commenting or Other Official_____
Date_____
State or Federal Agency and Bureau**5. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION**

I hereby certify that this property is:

- ____ Entered in the National Register _____
____ Determined eligible for the National Register _____
____ Determined not eligible for the National Register _____
____ Removed from the National Register _____
____ Other (explain): _____

Signature of Keeper_____
Date of Action

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6. FUNCTION OR USE

Historic: Transportation

Sub: Water-related

Current: Transportation

Sub: Water-related

7. DESCRIPTION

ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION: N/A

MATERIALS:

Foundation: (Hull) Wood

Walls: (Hull) Wood

Roof: (Deck) Wood

Other: (Superstructure) Wood

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Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.

The Chesapeake Bay skipjack *Hilda M. Willing*, official number 202528, is a historic working oyster dredge sailboat homeported in Tilghman Island, Maryland. Built in 1905 at Oriole, Maryland, she is 40 feet long, 14 feet wide, and has a depth of 3 feet, 1 inch.

HULL

The hull is cross-planked with a sharp convex bow, flat transom and hard chine. The clipper bow has a sharp raking stem with a curved longhead or cutwater beneath the bowsprit. Mounted on the longhead are hand-carved trailboards with a typical patriotic design. On the cheek boards is an American eagle sitting on a U.S. shield with a cannon, ram rod, and flag crossed at the bottom. On the long board are three U.S. shields separated first by the name of the vessel in yellow and then two leaf clusters painted green. The shields are painted red and white but where it should be blue it is painted black. The vessel name is also painted in yellow on black nameboards mounted just aft of the stem on the bow. The bowsprit is 18 feet, 11 inches long, and painted white except for the forwardmost 6 feet, 6 inches which is painted light tan. It measures 9 inches wide and 7 feet thick at the aft end. *Willing's* stern is square with the rudder mounted amidships on pintles. A jib or push block for the pushboat is mounted on the starboard side of the transom and is 17 inches wide and 24 inches high. There are guards mounted along the sides of the hull midships to protect the sides from bumping dredges. The hull is painted white.

MAIN DECK

Willing has a traditional flush-deck with fore-and-aft decking averaging 3¾ inches wide. Stanchion posts are 9½ inches wide, 3 inches thick, and 20½ inches high. There is one crude hawse-hole, without a hawse pipe, cut in the port side, none on the starboard. The king plank is 1 foot, 7¾ inches wide and is made from two pieces of wood. It runs from the bow past the mast but stops short of the hatch. The main hatch is amidships between the mast and the deckhouse. The hatch measures 5 feet, 7 inches wide, 4 feet, 10½ inches long, and 8½ inches high. The hatch coaming material is of 2¾-inch stock. The hatch cover is made from two pieces of plywood painted light tan.

The winders and dredge winch box are mounted aft of the mast. The dredge winch is covered by a box made of plywood, measuring 3¼ feet wide, 3 feet, 9 inches long, and is 3 feet, 5½ inches high. Just aft of the winch box are two side-by-side hand pump openings in the deck each measuring 7½ inches wide by 7 inches long and made from 2-inch stock. A second smaller hatch is located aft of the pumps. It measures 3 feet wide, 2 feet, 3¾ inches long and 6½ inches high.

The cabin is 7 feet, 5½ inches long, 7 feet, 4 inches wide, and 2 feet, 6½ inches high. A window on the forward end measures 20½ inches long and 14½ inches high and is protected by 7 iron bars set in the window framing. A dog house set on the aft end of the cabin is 29¾ inches wide, 46 inches long at the bottom and due to the slant bank of the forward end is only 35 inches long at the top. The dog house door is painted light brown.

The mechanism for the ship's wheel is covered by a box located amidships at the stern. The

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box measures 19½ inches wide, 31½ inches long and 24 inches high. A stainless steel wheel controls the hydraulic steering mechanism which replaced the original patent steering engine. Davits for the push boat are mounted facing aft at each side of the stern and are made from 2-inch round pipe. A solid log rail lines the outer edges of the deck forward and double pinrail is fitted aft. Each wooden rail is 2½ inches wide and 1¾ inches thick. Everything except as noted above is painted white.

RIGGING

Hilda M. Willing carries the standard skipjack rig of a jib-headed mainsail and a large jib. Her single mast has standing rigging of double shrouds which are adjustable by turnbuckles, a forestay, jib-stay, and topping lift. The mast has a 10½-inch diameter at the deck and rakes aft to a considerable degree. The sharply raking masts and simple rig of skipjacks allowed a large amount of sail to be carried with a small crew because the rake kept the center of effort of the sail near the deck.

The mainsail is laced to the boom and carried on wooden hoops at the mast. The boom is jawed to the mast. The jib has a club along its foot and rigged out to the bowsprit. Lazyjacks are used to furl both the mainsail and jib. The bowsprit is set up with double chain bobstays and double chain bowsprit shrouds.

DREDGING GEAR

She carries two dredges, one on each side with the winders and their motor just forward midships. Where the dredge comes up onboard on each side is a protective horizontal steel roller bar mounted about midships along the rails. A vertical metal bar is mounted to the hull just aft of the horizontal bar to protect the rail from the dredge wire while dredging and hulling the dredge.

PUSHBOAT

In addition to her sail rig, *Willing* carries a motorized pushboat suspended from davits over the stern. This boat nudges into the push block on the starboard side of the transom to provide power when docking or when allowed for dredging.

CHANGES IN ORIGINAL PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

As a working vessel, *Hilda M. Willing* has undergone periodic renovation throughout her career. Until 1967, skipjacks by law were limited to sail power only. Thus the stern davits and pushboat are relatively recent modifications. The plywood hatch covers, plywood dredge winch box, stainless steel wheel, and hydraulic steering gear are all later modifications of gear. Her present owner "Pete" Sweitzer made these changes as well as raising the deck about 8 inches.

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Page 6
National Register of Historic Places Registration Form**8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:
Nationally: X Statewide: Locally:

Applicable National
Register Criteria:

A X B C X D

Criteria Considerations
(Exceptions):

A B C D E F G

NHL Criteria:

1, 4

NHL Theme(s):

- XIV. Transportation
B. Ships, Boats, Lighthouses, and Other Structures
- XII. Business
A. Extractive or Mining Industries
5. Fishing and Livestock

Areas of Significance:

Maritime History
Transportation
Commerce
Architecture (Naval)

Period(s) of Significance:

1905-1943

Significant Dates:

1905

Significant Person(s):

N/A

Cultural Affiliation:

N/A

Architect/Builder:

Unknown

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National Register of Historic Places Registration Form**State Significance of Property, and Justify Criteria, Criteria Considerations, and Areas and Periods of Significance Noted Above.**

The Chesapeake skipjack fleet is the last commercial sail powered fishing fleet in North America and the only "cohesive" sailing fleet in the western hemisphere.¹ Introduced to the Chesapeake Bay in the 1890s, the skipjack became the preferred oyster dredge boat. During the first quarter of this century the skipjack fleet numbered into the hundreds; today only about 25 have survived the hard demanding work of a sailing oyster dredge boat. Only 16 of those survive afloat. Among these *Hilda M. Willing* retains essentially her physical appearance as originally built. *Willing* is also one of the few early skipjacks which is in good physical condition, and represents one of the smaller and better sailing vessels of the fleet.

Of the skipjacks that survive, two were determined worthy of NHL nomination, *Kathryn* and *Hilda M. Willing*. Among the skipjacks built prior 1943 (the 50 year cut off date), most either were in poor condition, or no longer working as oyster dredge boats. *E.C. Collier*, one of the older boats, is now a display in dry storage. The better conditioned skipjacks such as *Lady Katie*, *Herman M. Krenz*, and *Rosie Parks* are younger than 50 years old. *Kathryn*, represents one of the earliest extant and one of the few fore-and-aft planked skipjacks; while *Willing* represents one the smaller, better maintained, and better sailing skipjacks.

THE DEVELOPMENT AND IMPORTANCE OF THE CHESAPEAKE SKIPJACK

The Chesapeake oyster fishery dates to the early 1800s when vessels from New England and New York and later New Jersey and Delaware came to the Bay to dredge oysters due to the depletion of their own native beds. Concern for depletion of the Chesapeake beds led to conservation laws banning dredging in Maryland waters in 1820 thereby restricting the harvesting of oysters to hand tonging.

In 1828 Thomas Kensett opened Baltimore's first oyster cannery having been awarded the first United States patent for his process "to preserve animal, vegetable, and other perishable goods." Because oysters were an extremely perishable product for which there was wide demand, they proved the ideal first food product to be experimentally massed-marketed through the use of the canning process. Kensett's process, followed by several other canners, allowed for national distribution of Maryland oysters.

Canning increased the demand for oysters and the ban on dredging was repealed in 1865, though dredging was restricted to specific deep water oyster beds and sail-powered vessels only. These resource conservation laws served to help save commercial sailing vessels by banning steam and later internal combustion engine powered vessels from dredging.

Due to the heavy demand for oysters the Chesapeake bug-eye oyster dredge boat reached its popularity. By the 1880s over 700 Maryland licensed dredge boats consisting of pungies,

¹ Thomas C. Gillmer, *Working Watercraft*, (Camden, ME: International Marine Publishing Company, 1972), p. 54.

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schooners, sloops, and mainly bugeyes dredged the Bay. In 1884-1885 a record 15 million bushels of oysters were harvested from the Bay. But, as with the oyster grounds to the north, this demand and resulting over utilization of the resource caused the decline of the native Chesapeake oyster population. By the 1890s shipbuilding costs also began to rise due to depleted supplies of large timbers and higher labor costs. Similarly, large trees necessary for the construction of the traditional bugeye log hull were becoming scarce. These changes in natural resources brought in the age of the skipjack.

A vessel was needed that was cheaper and easier to construct than the popular "chunk" or log built bugeyes and traditionally framed schooners; that had a shallow draft so it could navigate the shallow waters of the Chesapeake; and had enough sail power and deck space to operate efficiently as an oyster dredge boat. The skipjack, a shallow draft, centerboard sailing vessel specially designed and adapted for use in the Chesapeake Bay as an oyster dredge boat met this need.

The skipjack, according to Chapelle, is the direct descendant of the sharpie which was introduced to the Chesapeake Bay from Long Island Sound about 1868. The sharpie never became popular on the Bay, perhaps because the Bay was larger and required a bigger more burdensome boat than the Sound. Chesapeake oystermen also preferred the sloop rig over the double masted sharpie because the sloop rig was more powerful for dredging in light winds. Thus regional preference and water conditions dictated a need for a sharpie-like craft which was made more beamy by adding a little deadrise aft.

These sloop rigged vessels, rarely over 30 feet in length, were called Hampton flatties.² The V-bottom or hard chine hull originated after the American Civil War in the Long Island Sound area from the "Northern skipjack" type, but it was the Chesapeake which adopted the hard chine and popularized it.³ Thus the skipjack (or two-sail bateau as they were also called) may be the result of a complex evolution, possibly including the sharpie, the northern unframed skipjack from Long Island Sound and the square-sterned and often flat-bottomed Chesapeake crab skiff referred to as the Hampton flattie.

Chesapeake boat-builders enlarged these skiffs to 25 to 50 feet, giving them a V-bottom or deadrise hull covered by a deck, cabin, and powered by a single-masted two sail sloop rig. The resulting skipjack is characterized as unframed, hard chine (angular sided versus a rounded bilge), typically cross or herring bone planked, with a V-bottomed hull form with one mast and two sails. A few of the early hulls were framed with fore and aft planking.

Rules of thumb for skipjack design include, maximum beam on deck equal to 1/3 length on deck, centerboard length is equal to 1/3 length on deck, mast length is equal to length on deck plus beam, boom length is equal to length on deck, and bowsprit length is equal to

² Howard I. Chapelle, "The Migration of An American Boat Type", (*Contributions from the Museum of History and Technology*, Paper 25, U.S. National Museum Bulletin 228, Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1961), p. 148-149; and Howard I. Chapelle, *American Small Sailing Craft: Their Design, Development and Construction*, (New York, W.W. Norton & Company, 1951).

³ Richard J. Dodds and Pete Leshner, editors, *A Heritage In Wood: The Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum's Small Craft Collection* (St. Michaels, Maryland, Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum, 1992), p. 45.

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beam. Skipjacks were comparatively inexpensive to build, easy to repair, and could be constructed by competent house carpenters or skilled oystermen; the skills of boat builders familiar with the more complicated to construct rounded bows and rounded bilges were not needed.

One suggestion for the origin of the name skipjack which certainly seems appropriate is that it is an archaic English word meaning "inexpensive yet useful servant"⁴ The typical cost of a skipjack in 1905 was \$3000. It is said the skipjack is the most economical survivor of the Chesapeake sailing workboats.⁵ The skipjack's wide beam, hard chine, and low freeboard provided a stable, large, working and storage platform. The single-masted rig, with sharp-headed mainsail (a few had gaff rigged mainsails) and large jib, was easy to handle, powerful in light winds, and handy in coming about quickly without losing way, which was so necessary for their continuous "licks" (passes) over the oyster beds.⁶

The first recorded herring-bone planked skipjack is the 1891 built *Ruby G. Ford*, which last sailed about 1986 and is now abandoned and in ruins at Tilghman Island, Maryland.⁷ Holt suggests the *Ford* may have been replanked as most of the early skipjacks were framed with fore and aft planking such as the *Kathryn*, built in 1901. Hard chine boats have no need for bottom frames because of their sturdy cross planked bottoms.⁸

Some historians have estimated that nearly 2,000 skipjacks have been built, all specifically designed for dredging oysters from the Chesapeake Bay. The peak building years were during the 1890s and first decade of the 20th century. By the 1930s the fleet had dwindled dramatically as old vessels were abandoned in the face of low oyster prices and an almost non-existent market. This trend continued into the post World War II era which saw a revival of the oyster industry and a group of new skipjacks added to the fleet, bringing the numbers up into the 70s. By 1971 the fleet had dropped to 43 vessels, with a more or less steady decline since. When the skipjack fleet was nominated to the National Register in 1985 it was estimated 35 skipjacks existed; by 1993 only about 25 survive afloat. Of these, approximately 16 skipjacks still work the Chesapeake with only just more than half dating from the pre-1930s early period. Most of these early boats have been rebuilt at least once and a few carry the same name although they have been completely rebuilt. It is estimated only 7 to 10 will dredge this winter.⁹ Many of these are in poor condition. The decline in the oyster harvests leave little if any profit available to the skipjack owners to properly maintain their vessels.

⁴ Frederick Tilp, "Did You Know?", *Chesapeake Bay Magazine*, (Volume 15, Number 5, 1985), p. 15.

⁵ Gillmer, p. 50.

⁶ R. J. Holt, Introduction, in *Notes on Chesapeake Bay Skipjacks* by Howard I. Chappelle (St. Michaels, MD: Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum, reprint of 1944 *American Neptune* article), p. unpagd.

⁷ Holt, *Ibid.*; and Fred Hopkins, phone interview by Ralph Eshelman, 1 September 1993.

⁸ Gillmer, p. 50.

⁹ Ed Farley interview by Ralph Eshelman, Tilghman Island, Maryland, 10 September 1993.

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Recent additions to the fleet include the *Dee of St. Mary's*, built in 1979, the *Connie Francis*, built in 1982, and the *Nathan of Dorchester*, under construction in 1993. Several vessels have been bought by individuals to be converted to yachts—a conversion which is not ideal due to the low hold height. Pleasure boaters often have required more head room which too often resulted in ugly cabin additions on deck.

The skipjack fleet has become a preservation priority in Maryland. The governor and the Maryland Historical Trust prepared a Skipjack Preservation Plan in 1988. One result of this effort was the creation of a shipyard along the waterfront of Fell's Point, Baltimore. Operated by the Lady Maryland Foundation's Maritime Institute, the yard repairs skipjacks using the labor of inner-city children under the supervision of trained shipwrights. Thus far several skipjacks have received repair work in this yard.

With the oyster harvest at an all time low and repeated threats of a moratorium on oystering in a desperate attempt to conserve the depleted oyster beds, the working skipjacks remaining in the fleet are in trouble. With little if any profit being made by their owners, the maintenance of the skipjacks is suffering. A few captains have attempted "dude" charters with mixed, but mostly limited success. Even the skipjack which is considered the Chesapeake's most economical sailing workboat cannot make a living for her owner when the oysters are too scarce to make a profit.

The extinction of America's last commercial fishing sailing fleet is unfortunately possible. This sailing fleet has survived as long as it has only due to the ban on power, although a powered push boat or yawl is allowed to motor the skipjack to and from the beds. Beginning in 1967 the skipjacks were allowed to dredge under power on Mondays and Tuesdays. In fact, most skipjacks today operate mostly on power days. Thus technically, much of the sailing fleet is not truly a working sailing fleet anymore.

CONSTRUCTION AND CAREER OF *HILDA M. WILLING*

The *Hilda M. Willing* was built in 1905 at Oriole, Somerset County, Maryland, along the Manokin River off Tangier Sound. She was homeported at Crisfield, Maryland with a crew of five. Samuel L. Laird of Oriole, Maryland, was owner by 1926 and sold her to Thornton Webster, of Wenona, Maryland, in 1927. By 1929 Roland Bozman of Wenona became the owner with her crew reduced to four. Bozman sold the *Willing* to R. E. Hoffman who resold her to Addie M. Jones by 1941. T. Rayner Graham owned her in 1943 and abandoned her in Annapolis, Maryland, as many others had done with their skipjacks during the war. Leslie Pope of Oxford, Maryland, bought her for \$400. Pope changed her homeport to Cambridge, Maryland before reselling her to Robert F. "Pete" Sweitzer in 1947 for \$1600.

The 69-year-old Sweitzer has owned *Willing* ever since; over 45 years. This may be the longest ownership of a skipjack in the fleet's history. Since he has owned her, he has done most of the repair and maintenance work on her himself. He is recognized among the fleet as a good boat builder.¹⁰ Because of the age of *Willing*, she was built for the hand winder

¹⁰ Farley interview.

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days when the deck was heavily crowned so the sides would be low to the water for ease in bringing in the dredge.

Willing's owner has kept her working by making the necessary improvements to allow his boat to compete economically. This has required that changes be made from the original configuration. In 1949 Sweitzer was the first to install an automobile engine on a skipjack for hauling in the dredge. Prior to this, most captains had replaced the hand dredge with one cylinder Hettinger engines which shook the boats greatly as they ran. Sweitzer raised the sides of the vessel taking out the crown of the deck but leaving the same depth of the hold in the center. Higher sides were now preferred for stability due to the weight of the dredge gear. Most skipjacks built after the 1930s had this higher sided look. At the same time Sweitzer added a longer boom, deepened the centerboard, added a 2" by 8" oak skag to the keel, and took the traditional rake out of the mast making it plumb. Sweitzer in his own words said he "made a dumb boat into a smart one".

Willing is said to be the only skipjack which can come about with out use of the centerboard. She is noted for her ability to dredge in light air and her ability to dredge in heavy wind without her jib—a feat not many skipjacks can follow. The original trailboards were replaced in 1952 when Sweitzer hand-carved the set now on *Willing* following the original pattern. *Willing* also had a small eagle figurehead which was taken off after it deteriorated and was never replaced. About 1978 Sweitzer replaced the original Lake steering gear with the present hydraulic gear. He still has the original gear as well as the original deadeyes now replaced with turnbuckles. "Pete" Sweitzer has a reputation for doing what he thinks is best, not what is tradition or what the other watermen do. Sweitzer played a significant role in getting the Maryland legislature to pass the Monday and Tuesday dredge law—one many of the skipjack captains fought and now realize saved the skipjack from an earlier extinction.¹¹

¹¹ Robert "Pete" Sweitzer phone interview by Ralph Eshelman, 13 September 1993.

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National Register of Historic Places Registration Form**9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

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Farley, Ed. Interview by Ralph Eshelman, Tilghman Island, Maryland, 10 September 1993.

Gillmer, Thomas G. *Working Watercraft*, Camden, ME: International Marine Publishing Company, 1972.

Holt, R.J. Introduction, in *Notes on Chesapeake Bay Skipjacks* by Howard I. Chappelle, St. Michaels, MD: Chesapeake Bay Maritime Museum, reprint of 1944 *American Neptune* article.

Hopkins, Fred. Phone interview by Ralph Eshelman, 1 September 1993.

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Lang, Varley. *Follow the Water*, Winston-Salem, North Carolina: John F. Blair, 1961.

Sweitzer, "Pete" Robert. Phone interview by Ralph Eshelman, 13 September 1993.

Tilp, Frederick. "Did You Know?", *Chesapeake Bay Magazine*, Volume 15, Number 5, 1985.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ Preliminary Determination of Individual Listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- ☒ Previously Listed in the National Register.
- ☐ Previously Determined Eligible by the National Register.
- ☐ Designated a National Historic Landmark.
- ☐ Recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey: #
- ☐ Recorded by Historic American Engineering Record: #

Primary Location of Additional Data:

- ☐ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ Other State Agency
- ☐ Federal Agency
- ☐ Local Government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other (Specify Repository):

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Acreage of Property: Less than one (1) acre

UTM References: Zone Easting Northing
A 18 384240 4285550

Verbal Boundary Description:

All that area encompassed within the extreme length and breadth of the vessel.

Boundary Justification:

The boundary incorporates the entire area of the vessel as she lays at her berth.

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11. FORM PREPARED BY

Name/Title: Ralph E. Eshelman, Maritime Historian
(and heavy use of the Chesapeake Bay Skipjack Fleet National Register Nomination by
Mary Ellen Hayward)

Address: Academy of Natural Sciences
Benedict Estuarine Research Laboratory
Benedict, Maryland 20612

Telephone: 301/274-3134 or 410/326-4877

Date: September 26, 1993

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HILDA M. WILLING (skipjack)
Tilghman, Maryland

HILDA M. WILLING is a 40' long two-sail bateau, or V-bottomed deadrise type of centerboard sloop, commonly referred to as a skipjack. She has a beam of 14', a depth of 3.1', and a net registered tonnage of 6. She carries a typical skipjack rig of jib-headed mainsail and a single large jib with a club on its foot. Built in 1905 in Oriole, Maryland following traditional Bay design and construction methods, HILDA M. WILLING is significant as being one of the 35 surviving traditional Chesapeake Bay skipjacks and a member of the last commercial sailing fleet in the United States. HILDA M. WILLING is of special interest as being one of the older skipjacks in the fleet and for being one of the 19 surviving working skipjacks to have been built previous to 1912.

Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form

Survey No. T-531

Magi No.

DOE ☐ yes ☒ no

CHESAPEAKE BAY SKIPJACK FLEET THEMATIC GROUP

1. Name (indicate preferred name)

historic HILDA M. WILLING

and/or common

2. Location

street & number Gibsontown Road n/a not for publication

city, town Tilghman n/a vicinity of congressional district First

state Maryland 024 county Talbot 041

3. Classification

| Category | Ownership | Status | Present Use |
|--|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> district | <input type="checkbox"/> public | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied | <input type="checkbox"/> agriculture |
| <input type="checkbox"/> building(s) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private | <input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial |
| <input type="checkbox"/> structure | <input type="checkbox"/> both | <input type="checkbox"/> work in progress | <input type="checkbox"/> educational |
| <input type="checkbox"/> site | Public Acquisition | Accessible | <input type="checkbox"/> entertainment |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> object | <input type="checkbox"/> in process | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted | <input type="checkbox"/> government |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> being considered | <input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted | <input type="checkbox"/> industrial |
| | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> not applicable | <input type="checkbox"/> no | <input type="checkbox"/> military |
| | | | <input type="checkbox"/> museum |
| | | | <input type="checkbox"/> park |
| | | | <input type="checkbox"/> private residence |
| | | | <input type="checkbox"/> religious |
| | | | <input type="checkbox"/> scientific |
| | | | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> transportation |
| | | | <input type="checkbox"/> other: |

4. Owner of Property (give names and mailing addresses of all owners)

name Captain Robert Sweitzer

street & number telephone no.: 886-2284

city, town Tilghman state and zip code Maryland 21671

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. n/a liber

street & number folio

city, town state

6. Representation in Existing Historical Surveys

title Survey of Surviving Traditional Chesapeake Bay Craft

date 1983-1984 ☐ federal ☒ state ☐ county ☐ local

depository for survey records Maryland Historical Trust, 21 State Circle

city, town Annapolis state MD 21401

7. Description

Survey No. T-531

Condition

☒ excellent
☐ good
☐ fair

☐ deteriorated
☐ ruins
☐ unexposed

Check one

☐ unaltered
☒ altered

Check one

☒ original site

☐ moved date of move

☐ n/a

Prepare both a summary paragraph and a general description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

This vessel is a 40' long two-sail bateau, or V-bottomed deadrise type of centerboard sloop, commonly referred to as a skipjack. She was built in 1905 in Oriole, Maryland for work in the oyster dredge fleet. She has a beam of 14', a depth of 3.1', and a net registered tonnage of 6. She is Bay-built, using typical cross-planked construction methods and carries a typical skipjack rig of jib-headed mainsail and a large jib. She has a longhead or clipper bow and a square stern. The wooden hull is painted the traditional white.

HILDA M. WILLING has a sharp raking stem with a curved longhead beneath the bowsprit which is painted white but left bright at its end. She is square-sterned with a rudder mounted on pintles on the transom and a jib for the pushboat mounted to starboard on the transom. There are guards mounted on the sides of the hull amidships to protect it from the bumping of the dredges.

The single mast is set up with double shrouds adjusted by means of turnbuckles, as well as a forestay and jibstay. There is a topping lift leading to the end of the boom, which is jawed to the mast at its forward end. Lazyjacks are used for furling both the mainsail and the jib. The mainsail, laced to the boom, is jib-headed and the large jib has a club on its foot. The bowsprit is set up with double chain bobstays and chain bowsprit shrouds. In addition to the sail rig the skipjack carries a motorized pushboat suspended over the stern on davits.

The skipjack is flush-decked with several deck structures. These include: a wheelbox and wheel; cabin; and box over the winder engines. There is a solid log rail forward and a pinrail aft. Dredging gear includes oyster dredges, rollers mounted on the rails amidships, winders, and winder engine.

The vessel is painted white with brightwork trim at the end of the bowsprit. Trailboards carried on the longhead have the name HILDA M. WILLING in gold letters. The name is also painted on nameboards mounted on the bows.

8. Significance

Survey No.

T-531

| Period | Areas of Significance—Check and justify below | | | |
|---|---|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric | <input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric | <input type="checkbox"/> community planning | <input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> religion |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499 | <input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic | <input type="checkbox"/> conservation | <input type="checkbox"/> law | <input type="checkbox"/> science |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599 | <input type="checkbox"/> agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> economics | <input type="checkbox"/> literature | <input type="checkbox"/> sculpture |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699 | <input type="checkbox"/> architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> education | <input type="checkbox"/> military | <input type="checkbox"/> social/ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799 | <input type="checkbox"/> art | <input type="checkbox"/> engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> music | <input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement | <input type="checkbox"/> philosophy | <input type="checkbox"/> theater |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900- | <input type="checkbox"/> communications | <input type="checkbox"/> industry | <input type="checkbox"/> politics/government | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> transportation |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> invention | | <input type="checkbox"/> other (specify) |

Specific dates 1905 Builder/Architect Unknown

check: Applicable Criteria: ☒ A ☐ B ☒ C ☐ D
and/or
Applicable Exception: ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G ☐ none

Level of Significance: ☒ national ☐ state ☐ local

Prepare both a summary paragraph of significance and a general statement of history and support.

This vessel is significant as being one of the 35 surviving traditional Chesapeake Bay skipjacks and a member of the last commercial sailing fleet in the United States. Out of a fleet of hundreds of skipjacks that worked Bay waters in the early years of this century, today only this small number remain to carry on the tradition of working sail.

The skipjack evolved as a distinct type of Bay vessel in the 1890's as a cheaper-to-construct alternative to the earlier bugeyes and other traditional framed craft, in a period when shipbuilding costs were rising and the oyster catch was diminishing. The type was devised by enlarging (to 25 to 60 feet) the hull of the ordinary, unframed, square-sterned Bay crabbing skiff, and giving it a deadrise bottom, a deck, a cabin, and a sloop rig. The result—with its unframed, hard chine, cross-planked, V-bottom—proved inexpensive to build, easy to repair, and could be constructed by a competent house carpenter. Skipjacks were specifically designed as oyster dredge boats, with wide beams and low freeboard lending stability and providing a large working space on deck. The single masted rig, with sharp-headed mainsail and large jib, was easy to handle, powerful in light winds, and handy in coming about quickly for another pass over the oyster beds.

The Maryland oyster season begins November 1 and ends March 15. Skipjacks must dredge under sail on all days except Mondays and Tuesdays, when they are allowed to use their motorized pushboat for dredging. The pushboat, normally carried on davits at the stern, is lowered into the water and literally "pushes" the skipjack along from behind, the nose of the pushboat resting against a "jig" on the stern of the skipjack. The pushboat can also legally be used to get the skipjack to and from the oyster beds each day. Each skipjack's crew is made up of the captain, who is often also the owner, and five crew members.

HILDA M. WILLING is of interest as being one of the older skipjacks still dredging in the Chesapeake fleet. She was built in 1905 in Oriole, Maryland following traditional Bay-area design and construction methods. She has worked in the oyster-dredging fleet since her building and is presently based at Tilghman Island. The vessel is one of the 21 surviving working skipjacks to have been built previous to 1912, although, like the other members of the fleet, she has been much repaired over the years in true Chesapeake fashion.

See Thematic Group nomination cover form, Continuation Sheets
No. 8-13.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property less than one acre

Quadrangle name Tilghman, MD

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References do NOT complete UTM references

A 18 384240 4285550
Zone Easting Northing

B
Zone Easting Northing

C

D

E

F

G

H

Verbal boundary description and justification

This working vessel is usually docked at the location indicated in Item 2. Historic boundaries are coterminous with the hull.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

| state | n/a | code | county | code |
|-------|-----|------|--------|------|
|-------|-----|------|--------|------|

| state | code | county | code |
|-------|------|--------|------|
|-------|------|--------|------|

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Anne Witty/ M. E. Hayward

organization Radcliffe Maritime Museum
Maryland Historical Society

date May, 1984

street & number 201 West Monument Street

telephone (301) 685-3750

city or town Baltimore

state Maryland 21201

The Maryland Historic Sites Inventory was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 supplement.

The survey and inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

return to: Maryland Historical Trust
Shaw House
21 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
(301) 269-2438

Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form

Survey No. T-531

Magi No. 2105315733

DOE yes no

1. Name (indicate preferred name)

historic HILDA M. WILLING

and/or common

2. Location

street & number Gibsonville Rd not for publicationcity, town Tilghman vicinity of congressional district state Maryland county Talbot

3. Classification

| Category | Ownership | Status | Present Use |
|-----------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| <u> </u> district | <u> </u> public | <u> </u> occupied | <u> </u> agriculture |
| <u> </u> building(s) | <u> </u> private | <u> </u> unoccupied | <u> </u> commercial |
| <u> </u> structure | <u> </u> both | <u> </u> work in progress | <u> </u> educational |
| <u> </u> site | Public Acquisition | Accessible | <u> </u> entertainment |
| <u> </u> object | <u> </u> in process | <u> </u> yes: restricted | <u> </u> government |
| | <u> </u> being considered | <u> </u> yes: unrestricted | <u> </u> industrial |
| | <u> </u> not applicable | <u> </u> no | <u> </u> military |
| | | | <u> </u> other: |

4. Owner of Property (give names and mailing addresses of all owners)

name Captain Robert Sweitzerstreet & number telephone no.: 886-2284city, town Tilghman state and zip code Maryland 21671

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. liber street & number folio city, town state

6. Representation in Existing Historical Surveys

title date federal state county local depository for survey records city, town state

7. Description

Survey No. T-531

| | | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|---|--|
| Condition | | Check one | Check one |
| <input type="checkbox"/> excellent | <input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated | <input type="checkbox"/> unaltered | <input type="checkbox"/> original site |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good | <input type="checkbox"/> ruins | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered | <input type="checkbox"/> moved date of move _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> fair | <input type="checkbox"/> unexposed | | |

Prepare both a summary paragraph and a general description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

This vessel is a 40' long two-sail bateau, or V-bottomed deadrise type of centerboard sloop, commonly referred to as a skipjack. She was built in 1905 in Oriole, Maryland for work in the oyster dredge fleet. She has a beam of 14', a depth of 3.1', and a net registered tonnage of 6. She is Bay-built, using typical cross-planked construction methods and carries a typical skipjack rig of jib-headed mainsail and a large jib. She has a longhead or clipper bow and a square stern. The wooden hull is painted the traditional white.

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8. Significance

Survey No.

T-531

| Period | Areas of Significance—Check and justify below | | | |
|---|---|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric | <input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric | <input type="checkbox"/> community planning | <input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> religion |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499 | <input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic | <input type="checkbox"/> conservation | <input type="checkbox"/> law | <input type="checkbox"/> science |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599 | <input type="checkbox"/> agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> economics | <input type="checkbox"/> literature | <input type="checkbox"/> sculpture |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699 | <input type="checkbox"/> architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> education | <input type="checkbox"/> military | <input type="checkbox"/> social/ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799 | <input type="checkbox"/> art | <input type="checkbox"/> engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> music | <input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement | <input type="checkbox"/> philosophy | <input type="checkbox"/> theater |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900- | <input type="checkbox"/> communications | <input type="checkbox"/> industry | <input type="checkbox"/> politics/government | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> transportation |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> invention | | <input type="checkbox"/> other (specify) |

| Specific dates | 1905 | Builder/Architect | Unknown |
|----------------|------|-------------------|---------|
|----------------|------|-------------------|---------|

check: Applicable Criteria: ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D
and/or

Applicable Exception: ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G

Level of Significance: ☐ national ☐ state ☐ local

Prepare both a summary paragraph of significance and a general statement of history and support.

This vessel is significant as being one of the 36 surviving traditional Chesapeake Bay skipjacks and a member of the last commercial sailing fleet in the United States. Out of a fleet of hundreds of skipjacks that worked Bay waters in the early years of this century, today only this small number remain to carry on the tradition of working sail.

The skipjack evolved as a distinct type of Bay vessel in the 1890's as a cheaper-to-construct alternative to the earlier bugeyes and other traditional framed craft, in a period when shipbuilding costs were rising and the oyster catch was diminishing. The type was devised by enlarging (to 25 to 60 feet) the hull of the ordinary, unframed, square-sterned Bay crabbing skiff, and giving it a deadrise bottom, a-deck, a cabin, and a sloop rig. The result—with its unframed, hard chine, cross-planked, V-bottom—proved inexpensive to build, easy to repair, and could be constructed by a competent house carpenter. Skipjacks were specifically designed as oyster dredge boats, with wide beams and low freeboard lending stability and providing a large working space on deck. The single masted rig, with sharp-headed mainsail and large jib, was easy to handle, powerful in light winds, and handy in coming about quickly for another pass over the oyster beds.

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9. Major Bibliographical References

Survey No. T-531

Howard I. Chapelle, American Small Sailing Craft (New York: W.W. Norton, 1951)article by Jack McClintock, Washington Post Magazine, March 4, 1979

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property _____

Quadrangle name _____

Quadrangle scale _____

UTM References do NOT complete UTM references

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Verbal boundary description and justification

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Anne Witty/ M.E. Hayward

organization Maryland Historical Society

date 5/84

street & number 201 W. Monument St.

telephone 685-3750

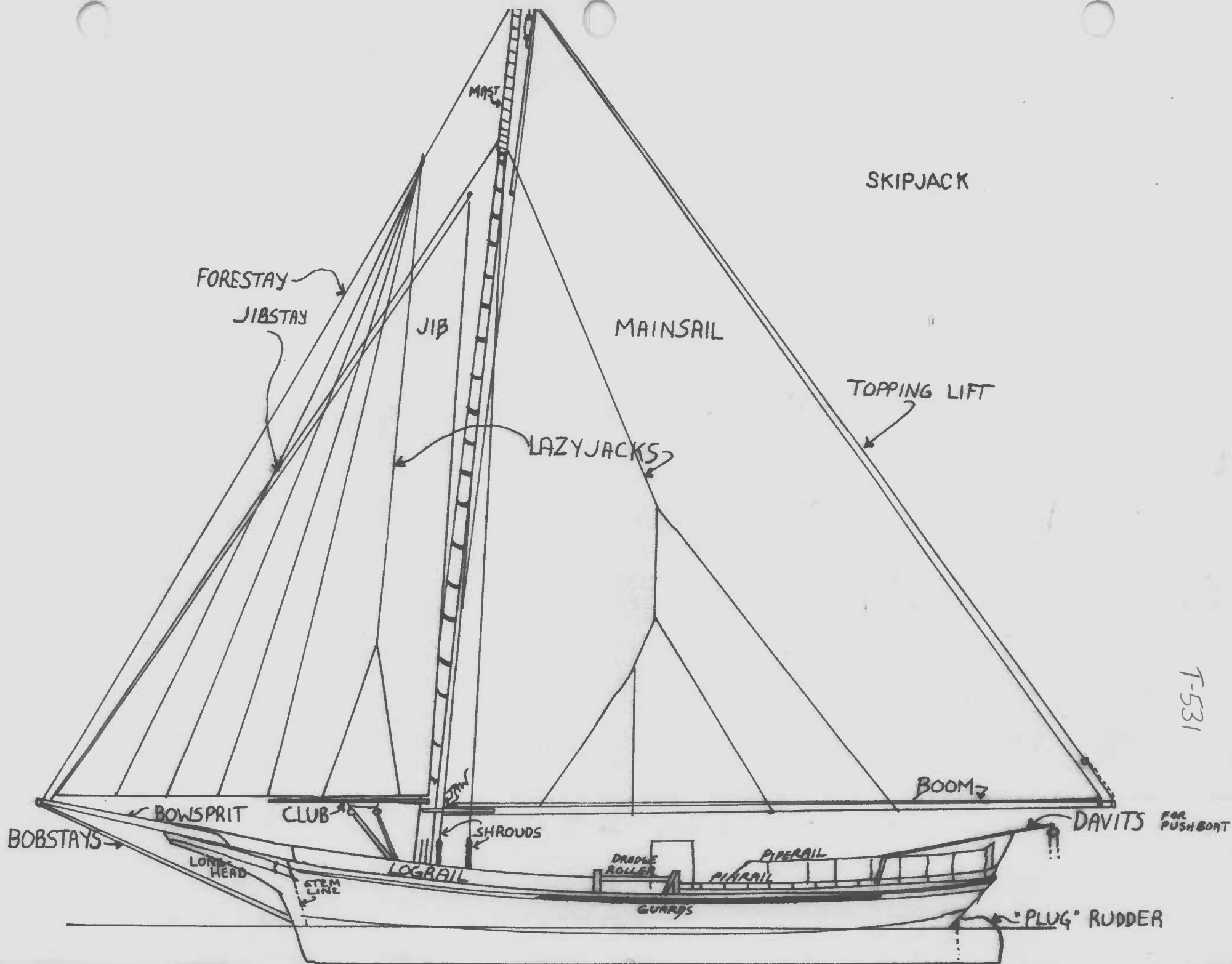
city or town Baltimore

state Maryland

The Maryland Historic Sites Inventory was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 supplement.

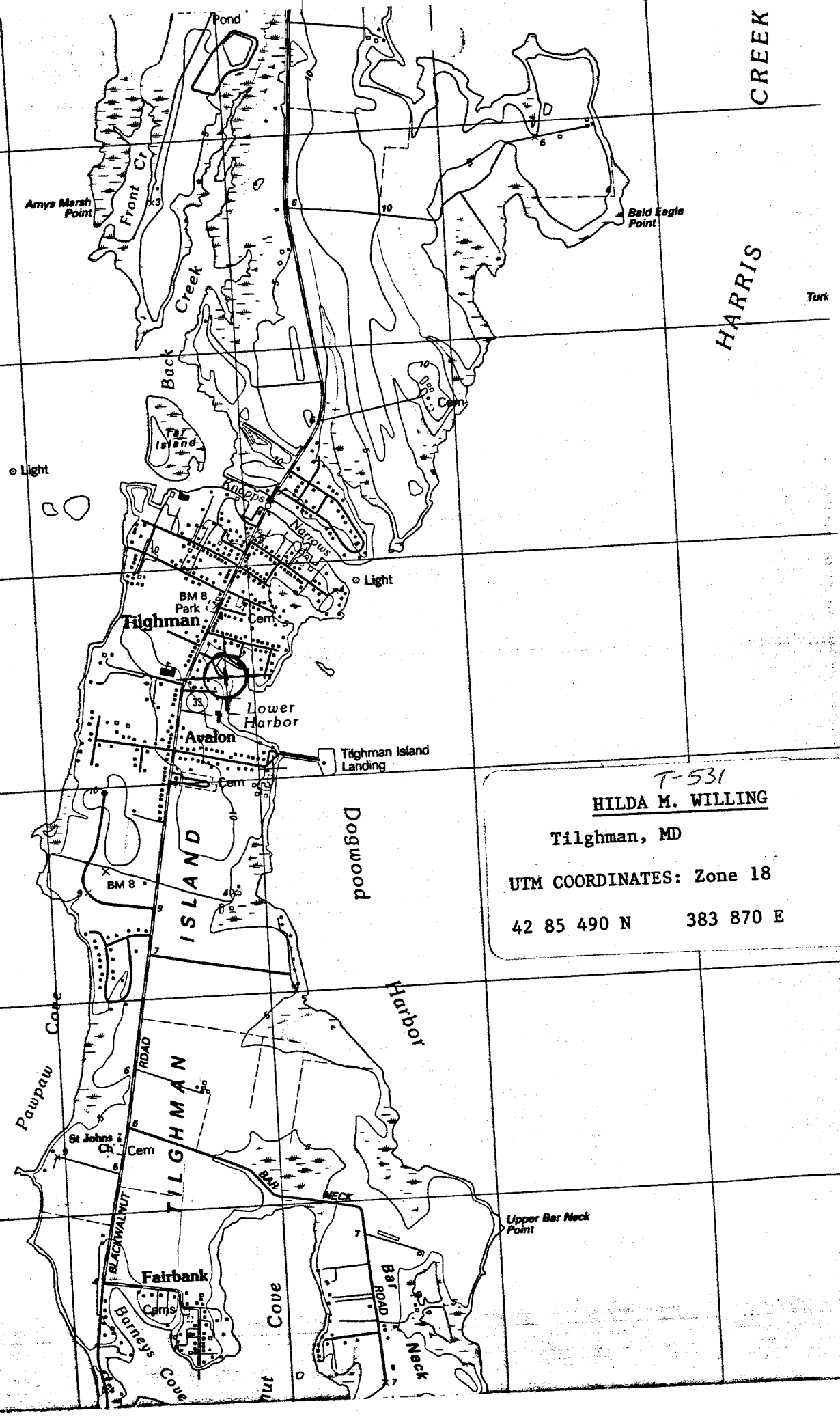
The survey and inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

return to: Maryland Historical Trust
Shaw House
21 State Circle
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
(301) 269-2438



T-531

BAY



CREEK

HARRIS

Turk

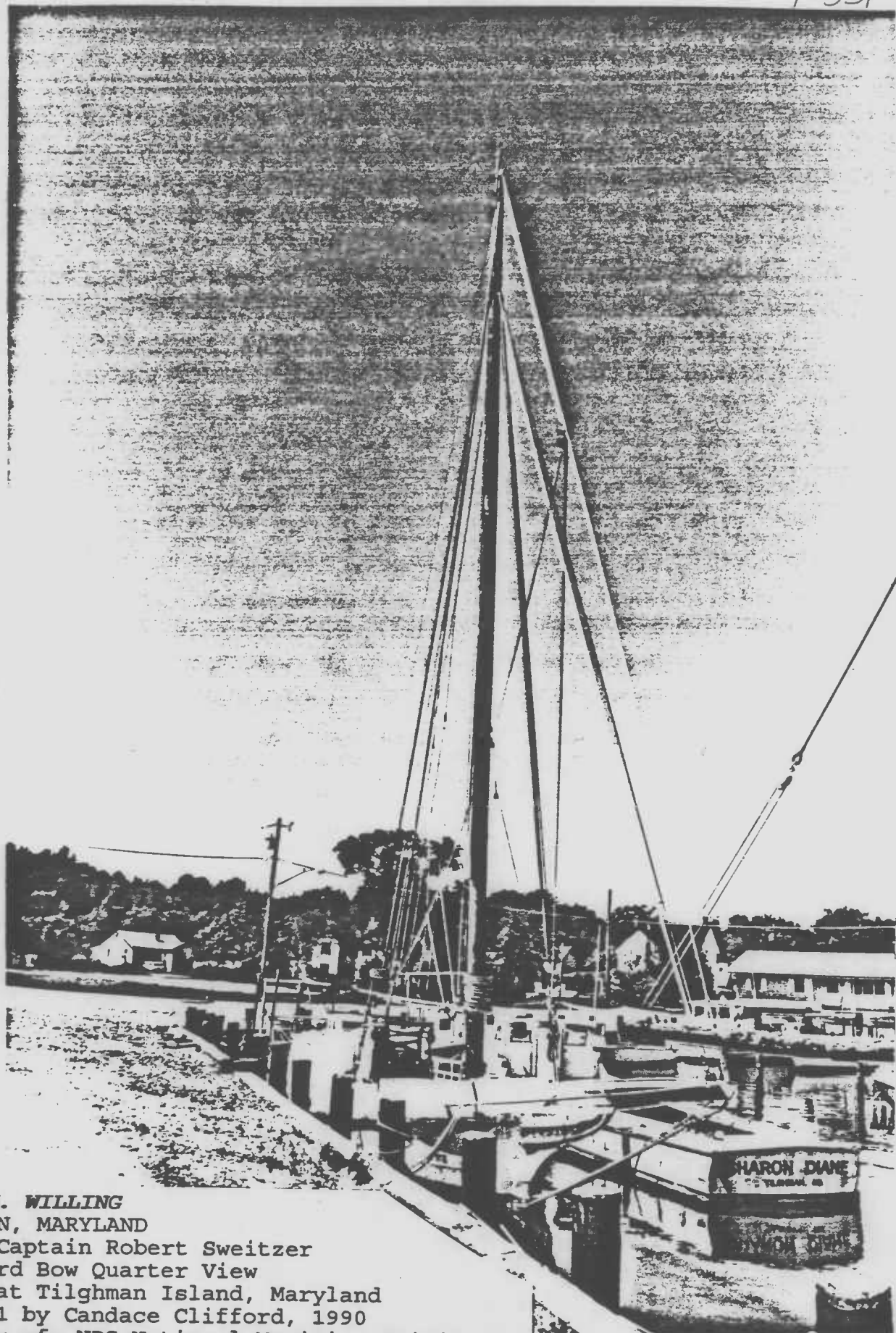
T-531
HILDA M. WILLING

Tilghman, MD

UTM COORDINATES: Zone 18

42 85 490 N 383 870 E

T-531



HILDA M. WILLING

TILGHMAN, MARYLAND

Owner: Captain Robert Sweitzer

Starboard Bow Quarter View

Moored at Tilghman Island, Maryland

Photo #1 by Candace Clifford, 1990

Courtesy of: NPS National Maritime Initiative



401-29

T-531

HILDA M. WILLING
Tilghman, Md.

Starboard side - bow
M.C. Wootton 7/84



401-35

T-531

HILDA M. WILLING
Tilghman, Md.

Starboard side - stern
M.C. Wootton 7/84



T-531

-Skipjack

HILDA M. WILLING
Tilghman, Md

87/20

shoot @

6

87/20

port side sail
M.C. Wootton

11/83

The skipjack Hilda M. Willing, built in
1905 in Tilghman Island.
and currently based at

NR listed 16 May 85

built c. 1905

traditional Chesapeake Bay skipjack



T-531

HILDA M. WILLING
Tilghman, Md

port side sail
M.C. Wootton

11/83

95%